

But she loved him all the more for his helplessness. She felt her eyes flooding with tears again at the thought of the future. Frank was whistling a melody.

F—R—A—N— she had written, and then the ferrule encountered a soft and yielding substance that obliterated the fourth letter as her umbrella point dragged it forth from its hiding place. She looked curiously upon the shapeless substance. It was waxy, something like beeswax, and as she looked at it in a disinterested way it was suddenly borne in upon her that this strange, amorphous substance, probably some sea growth, was exactly like their own natures, plastic, ready to be beaten and molded, to take any imprint that was made in it. She flung it into the air and turned to her sweetheart.

"Frank, dear, if you are to get that train home we had better be starting," she said.

He agreed, and they clung together in one last embrace, to be the last for goodness knew how long. Then they turned their steps sadly toward the station. They were upon a lonely part of the sands, but half a mile away the board walk terminated, and the big hotels that fringed it were not wholly devoid of guests. Little figures of men and women dotted the promenade. Maisie shuddered as they two ascended the slope of the walk and began that desolate walk through the dreary sea-front. It was like coming back from fairyland to the world of humanity again—that world which had despised and rejected them and had no place for them.

Frank turned and gripped Maisie's arm fiercely.

"Dear, I'm going to make good," he said. "It must be that I am of some use in the world. It cannot be that you and I are destined never to be anything more to one another and just because of the lack of a few thousand dollars. If I can earn two thousand dollars we will have our farm; then I shall be able to write

something worth while. I know we shall succeed."

Poor Frank! Maisie looked at him wistfully. Neither of them had ever owned fifty dollars at a time. And Frank was close on thirty. That two thousand dollars would have to drop from the skies; nothing seemed less possible. She watched Frank's slouching figure with a heartache. How shabby he was! The resolution had already dwindled away. He was only a poor clerk; he would never be anything more.

They were walking among the straggling visitors to the little place. A nurse-girl wheeled two fat infants in a baby-carriage. A ridiculous-looking little man with waxed mustaches was approaching them. Probably he was earning ten times as much as Frank, thought Maisie, with a fierce hatred of him. It began to drizzle—a fine penetrating rain that blotted out the sight of the sea. Both were in the depths of misery. Maisie opened her umbrella and held it over Frank—the action was instinctive and demonstrated her unconscious maternal attitude toward him. He linked his arm through hers, but he did not take the umbrella; he was far away, composing. Even Maisie was forgotten for the moment.

Maisie heard an exclamation behind her and the fat little man came panting toward her. Had she dropped something? Probably a handkerchief. But she would make the fat little man run; it was her idea of revenge upon him for his mustaches and his absurd, prosperous look. She heard him blowing and panting. "Mees! Mees!" he was calling. He was evidently a Frenchman.

"Mees! Mees! 'Ave you dropped this?"

Maisie turned round. The little man was standing before her, and in his hand he held—that absurd mass of sea growth which she had flung away upon the beach. She must have let it fall into her umbrella, and, when she opened it, it had slipped